



Improving Chapter Meeting Attendance and Participation

BY CRAIG WEYANDT, GCS

Yacht & Country Club of Stuart

Recently I asked the GCSAA about how I could improve at tence at the local monthly meetings. Here is their response for your review. As you will see, some we have tried, some we have not but at least I don't feel alone anymore.

Here is the GCSAA Response:

Craig,

The issue of low attendance at meetings and lack of member involvement is something many chapters are concerned with. Just based on the annual reports submitted for 1998, chapters reported an average meeting attendance of 25% of their total membership, regardless of their membership size. Your chapter may be slightly at the lower end (15 of 85 members = 17%), but your chapter is smaller than many.

In January, 13 affiliated chapters participated in the first strategic planning conference at GCSAA Headquarters. We sent them a pre-conference survey to complete, and asked them to estimate average attendance at their meetings. Most reported 25% or less, which was consistent with what we've been hearing.

During the conference, we briefly discussed how to increase meeting attendance and member participation. While no one had any "quick fix" solutions, there were some general ideas that your chapter may wish to consider:

- You mentioned holding the meeting at various times of the day. How about holding at least one meeting at a location other than a golf course? Perhaps a meeting location where no one has to serve as

the host superintendent would be less stressful. Also, it could provide a more relaxing atmosphere, but would still allow your members to be focused on association business, professional development, etc.

- You might also try a couple of theme meetings

sharing advice and tips to help fellow superintendents, and those who attend the meetings will pick up helpful tips that will benefit them.

- You also mentioned that you offer great education. Continue with a mixture of technical/agronomic topics and management issues. The California GCSA held its annual meeting last month and the educational program focused on Management in the Next Millennium and how superintendents will be impacted. (For more information

about the program, you can check out their Web site at <http://www.gcsaa.org/cgcsa/>). They've been struggling to increase attendance at their annual meeting, and although, the numbers this year weren't necessarily higher, those who attended said it was the best conference they'd ever held. They're beginning to build on this for next year.

- Everyone gets tired of surveys, but it's important to conduct some type of needs assessment to recognize and address the needs of your members. Perhaps your board could divide up the membership list and take some time to call your members. Ask them what they value most about being a member of your chapter, what they expect to get out of attending meetings (if appropriate, ask them why they're not attending meetings), and ask them what your association can do to better serve them.

- Some members may be willing to serve, but just haven't been asked. A special invitation to serve on a committee, host a meeting, or be in a charge of a small, short-term project is a great way to let them know they're a valued member of your chapter.

To: Janet Satterlee,
GCSAA Chapter Relations Manager
I am not sure if you can help me or not but here is my question. How can I improve attendance at my monthly chapter meetings? I am currently president of the Treasure Coast GCSA. I will be stepping down as president in July but as I reflect on the past year's attendance at the meetings, it is very disappointing.
I believe that I have tried the obvious: notified members as much in advance about the meeting, we have had afternoon meetings, night meetings, great education, I have even had meetings at no cost to the members and supplied dinner (about 15 showed out of nearly 85 members). Is this a trend across the US?
I know there is a lot of information out there and many ways to get it but I surely thought that the local meetings would be more well attended than this. Any suggestions that you might have would be greatly appreciated.
Thank you,
W. Craig Weyandt
President TCGCSA

ings. Select a specific topic and build the education and other meeting events around that topic. You could invite three or four superintendents to serve on a panel discussion about the topic.

- At the conference and show each year, innovative superintendent sessions are held. You may have attended some of these sessions where superintendents have an opportunity to share successes. Why not invite superintendents to do this at your chapter meetings? It could be just two or three minutes. They will feel good about

Advice From GCSAA

- Hold at least one meeting at a location other than a golf course.
- Try a couple of theme meetings.
- Invite superintendents to share success stories at your chapter meetings.
- Use a mixture of technical/agronomic topics and management issues for education programs.
- Have your board divide up the membership list and call each member.
- Establish a new-member committee to keep frequent contact with those who have joined within the past year or two to encourage them to participate in chapter meetings and activities.
- Maintain a file of brief, one-page profiles of each member.
- Send your newsletter to nonmember courses.
- Use E-mail to send reminders about meetings and other chapter news.
- Post a question on the chapter listserve (at the GCSAA web site) and ask how other chapters are dealing with low meeting attendance and/or member involvement.

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• Does your chapter have a new member or welcome committee? This committee could divide up the list of members who have joined within the past year or two, call them and invite them to the meetings. Make a point to introduce them to other members at meetings and chapter events. Perhaps this committee could be the ones to invite members to become involved in your chapter. Also, if members are new to the area, committee members could call them periodically to see how things are going.

• You might also want to ask your members to complete a brief, one-page member profile. I will fax a sample of this to you, along with an article on "Why Join An Association?" Some of the items listed in the article don't necessarily apply to every association, but most reinforce the importance of belonging and participating in an association.

• Continue to inform your members of what's happening through your newsletter. Do you send it to nonmember courses? E-mail is another great way to send reminders about meetings and other chapter news (if a good number of your members are online). You may want to check out the GolfSolutions.com Web site and consider

using their free services to post announcements about meetings, etc.

Joel Jackson has been in touch with us recently about developing a Web site for Florida. This would be a great opportunity for every Florida chapter to post membership information, news, and other information about their chapter. (If you do visit the California Web site, you'll see that each of the local chapters has its own page).

• Finally, I'd encourage you to post a question on the chapter listserve and ask how other chapters are dealing with low meeting attendance and/or member involvement.

Here's a link to the site. If you have any difficulty posting a message, just let me know. <http://lists.ksinet.com/shellcgi/lyris.pl?site=gcsaa> Clicking on this link will bring you to a page with the GCSAA lists. Click on that, and then click on the Chapter Administrator Listserve. You'll need to type in your e-mail address, but no password is required. Then there should be an option to post a new message. Click on that button. You can type in your message and when you're finished, hit send.

I hope this information is helpful. If not, let me know, and I'll research some more information and ideas.

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